



**TESTIMONY OF ROBERT BREX, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NORTHEAST COMMUNITIES AGAINST
SUBSTANCE ABUSE, ON BEHALF OF THE CONNECTICUT PREVENTION NETWORK**

In support of

S.B. No. 290 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE SALE AND PURCHASE OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS AND SIGNAGE CONCERNING THE USE OF SUCH PRODUCTS AND SYSTEMS.

Public Health Committee, March 2, 2016

Senator Gerrantana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Bob Brex and I am **testifying in support of SB 290- An Act Concerning the Sale and Purchase of Tobacco Products, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems and Vapor Products**, which would raise the age level for purchase of tobacco and nicotine delivery systems to twenty-one.

I am here representing the Connecticut Prevention Network, which is the Association of the Regional Action Councils in the state. CPN and the Regional Action Councils have a long history of supporting efforts to prevent our young people from future addiction to tobacco and other tobacco and nicotine products. The Regional Action Councils were original members of Mobilizing Against Tobacco for Children's Health and worked to remove smoking from public accommodations many years ago.

As of February 2016, 121 Cities in 9 states, and the entire State of Hawaii have taken the step to raise the purchase age to twenty-one. This covers over 14.6 million people. Popular support for raising the age is present, with the Centers for Disease Control finding in a July 2015 study that 75% of adults, 70% of current smokers and 65% of those ages 18-24 support raising the age to purchase.

In Connecticut, about 3% of middle school and 20% of high school student used some form of tobacco in the past 30 days and an estimated 56,000 children alive today will ultimately die prematurely from smoking related diseases. In addition, from 2011-2013 current e-cigarettes use more than doubled among high school students. (DPH, 2014)

According to tobacco21.org, teen smoking is not so much powered by illegal sales as it is legal sales to older youth. Raising access to age 21 would put legal purchases outside of the social circle of most high school students.

The Institute of Medicine in March 2015, released a report projecting the benefits of a nationwide tobacco 21 policy. It found that the results would be a 25% drop in youth smoking initiation, a 12% drop in overall smoking rates and 16,000 preterm birth and low birthrate deliveries averted in the first five years of a change. Their conservative estimate is that if age 21 purchase was adopted throughout the US that it would prevent 4.2 million years of life lost to smoking in kids alive today!

I do not feel the need to tell you the health implications of smoking but I will share one statistic from the American Lung Association that each pack of cigarettes consumed costs our society \$18.05 in increased health care and work related expenditures. This statistic clearly shows that whatever tax benefits a state may receive from the sales of these products is lost to the long term health effects.

As a preventionist, I know that the delaying of the age of onset to use helps to protect many more young people from eventual addiction. By increasing the age of purchase to twenty-one, it will reduce initiation in younger youth.

Again, I support SB 290 and will be pleased to answer any questions you may have on this subject.

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